

Greek Gourmet *Getaway*

By Charlotte Colquhoun

When Singaporean Sharona Hurmuses and her husband first bought a house on the Greek island of Mykonos they had no intention of running a boutique holiday villa, setting up epicurean tasting experiences, or producing their own wine.

Speaking to Sharona, one can't help but feel she should be running the Greek Tourism Organisation. Her enthusiasm for and knowledge of the country is second to none. She has even set up a charity gala event in Singapore, **A Night In Greece** (16 May at the American Club) to showcase the region's cuisine, accompanied by traditional dancing and a fashion show of young design talent. Proceeds from the event will go to youth charity Club Rainbow, supporting children with chronic and life-threatening illnesses.

In the meantime, though, we're keen to daydream about a holiday in the Greek islands.





Tell us about your villa in Mykonos.

It has actually never been our home; people kept on asking if they could rent it and so we've never lived there!

The exterior design, in blue and white, is very typical. But we wanted the inside and some of the architecture to reflect our travels, with a blend of Greek and Asian.

It was an older house and we did a lot of work to the property, breaking down outside walls, extending it in places, working on the pool, installing a BBQ pit and terraces for eating al fresco.

We love the service standards in Bali and that was how we tried to develop it. Our staff are unbelievable; they have been with us for umpteen years and nothing is too much for them. We offer full service, like a hotel, but in this beautifully private villa just a ten-minute walk to town and with exceptional views of the constant movement at sea and all the boats coming into the harbour.

What about the island in general?

Mykonos is a very upmarket place – the new Ibiza of Greece. A lot of celebrities visit each year. There are many white sand beaches and the large choice means that they're rarely too crowded. It's great for families who want to come together for a big celebration. There is windsurfing, sailing, horse-riding on trails, hiking, great beaches, not to mention wonderful nightlife and amazing food.



You said the magic word: food. What can a hungry traveller expect to eat on Mykonos?

I organise lunches for our guests, pairing local food with wine tasting at a boutique vineyard on the island. We try to offer the best of what people really like. For instance, we might start with a light watermelon, olive, feta and mint salad, which hardly even needs dressing thanks to the fabulous flavours. We make a cold soup with the vineyard's



home-grown tomatoes, and we also offer pork from the island, pan-fried and served with seasonal island vegetables like blanched local greens. The pork has a wonderful salty flavour, thanks to the volcanic soil. For dessert, we might finish with a rosemary crème brûlée. Our sommelier explains the wines that are matched with the food, which region they are from, and why they have been chosen. Sitting on the terrace, overlooking the vines, it's the perfect location to appreciate the wonderfully fresh, local produce.

And the wine is good, too?

Greece isn't well known for its local wines. People assume it is all about retsina, but we do have some great wines, brandies and ouzo. The winery used to belong to the island's famous monastery and there is an original stomping vat, which we used to make our own first bottle of sweet wine last year.

Mykonos is accessible via a direct flight to Athens and then a domestic flight (45 minutes) or ferry (3-5 hours). For more information about Villa Humuses, visit www.villahumuses.com. For more information about this month's gala event, visit www.anightingreece.com.



More on Mykonos

- Mykonos is one of the smallest islands in the Cyclades, an extremely popular group of Greek islands that includes Santorini and Naxos.
- The island is named after Mykonos, grandson of the god Apollo.
- The population of 10,000 is estimated to swell to a staggering 70,000 during the height of the tourist season in August.
- For a romantic and secluded evening in Mykonos Town, schedule dinner at 7pm. Even at the ever-popular Sea Satan Market (the location of the final scene in *The Bourne Identity*), you'll likely have the place to yourself since most restaurants tend to get busy around 10pm. 